



# Child Abuse Prevention Month • April 2004

## Fact Sheet

(FROM JULY 1, 2002 TO JUNE 30, 2003)

### What is child abuse or neglect?

Under Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 whose parent, or any other person responsible for the care of the child, does any or all of the following:

- Causes or threatens to cause a physical or mental injury (except for an accident)
- Fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or caring support
- Abandons the child
- Fails to provide the kind of supervision necessary for a child's age or development level
- Commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act involving a child, including rape, incest, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution or allows the child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

### How many children were reported as child abuse/neglect victims in Virginia?

In fiscal year 2003, **31,209** incidents of suspected child abuse/neglect – involving **46,381** children were reported to local social services departments across the state. For local statistics, see the Virginia Department of Social Services web site at [www.dss.state.va.us/family/cpsfacts.html](http://www.dss.state.va.us/family/cpsfacts.html)

### How many of the reported incidents were founded?

Founded means that a review of the facts met the legal criteria for abuse or neglect – **6,565** children in Virginia were found to have suffered abuse or neglect last year. (In addition, child protective workers determined that another **6,427** children were at high or moderate risk for future abuse.) Nationwide, **771,791** children were victims in confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect in calendar year 2001.

### How many Virginia children died as a result of abuse/neglect?

**31** children died as a result of child abuse or neglect in fiscal year 2003 – **25** were under age 3

### Who were the victims?

- **42%** of all child abuse victims were under age 6, whereas **65%** were under age 10
- **56%** were white; **41%**, African-American; **3%**, multi-racial and **1%** were Asian.

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## What were the types of abuse children suffered most often?

- **56%** of the maltreatment was due to physical neglect (failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or adequate supervision to protect the child's health and safety)
- **26%** was due to physical abuse and **12%** to sexual abuse
- **4%** was due to medical neglect and **2%** to mental abuse

## Who are the abusers?

In most cases, the abusers are the biological parents of the children, but each year there are also confirmed incidents of abuse by mothers' boyfriends, other relatives, babysitters, and other adult caretakers.

## How many caretakers were reported as abusers?

In fiscal year 2003, **5,764** parents/caretakers were found to have committed child abuse and another **5,501** were responsible for children determined to be at moderate or high risk of abuse or neglect.

## What is the cost of child abuse and neglect?

The cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is estimated at \$258 million per day, according to a Prevent Child Abuse America study. Abused and neglected children are more likely to exhibit behavior disorders, to become teen parents, to need special education and remedial help in school, to abuse alcohol and drugs, and to enter the juvenile justice system.

## How can child abuse and neglect be prevented?

- Recognize the warning signs: parents under chronic stress, children exhibiting negative and anxious behaviors, signs of physical abuse.
- Encourage families under stress to seek out support services.  
Call the **1-800-CHILDREN** support line.
- Report suspected child abuse and neglect. Call your local social services department or call the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at **1-800-552-7096**.



## Public Service Announcements

- :10** April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Wear a blue ribbon to show you care – everyone has a responsibility to prevent child abuse. Call 1-800-CHILDREN.
- :10** April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. If you are a parent under chronic stress, you can find the support you need. Call 1-800-CHILDREN.
- :10** April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call your local social services department or 1-800-552-7096.
- :30** Last year, 31 children in Virginia died from child abuse or neglect they suffered at the hands of someone they loved and counted on. Sadly, their deaths may have been prevented – if someone had noticed and reported the signs of abuse. Warning signs ... like parents under constant stress ... children who are anxious or violent or suffer frequent injuries. If you think you see it, report it. Call the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at 1-800-552-7096.
- :30** If you are a mother or father under constant stress, stop and think! – before you take it out on your child. You can find the help you need today. Call Prevent Child Abuse Virginia ... we want to stop child abuse and neglect before it happens ... through education, parent support groups, and individual family support. Call us at 1-800-CHILDREN – help is available.
- :30** April is Child Abuse Prevention Month – and everyone has a role in preventing child abuse. Wear a blue ribbon in April to show you care. Learn the warning signs of child abuse and neglect. Help parents under stress. Volunteer for organizations that promote strong families and prevent child abuse. And report child abuse if you suspect it. Call 1-800-CHILDREN to find out how you can help.



# Sample Press Release

**For Release:**      Date

**Contact:** Name

Name

## Organization

Phone Number

# Child Abuse Prevention Month Set for April

## Latest Child Abuse Statistics Underscore Need for Prevention

April is national Child Abuse Prevention Month, and individuals and organizations throughout Virginia will be raising public awareness about what everyone in the community can do to prevent child abuse and neglect. This year's theme in Virginia is "The Building Blocks for a Safe and Healthy Childhood," which focuses on the positive actions parents, children, and communities can take to promote safe and healthy child development.

The “Blue Ribbon Campaign” has become a visible national symbol for April’s Child Abuse Prevention Month. Organizations that advocate for child abuse prevention distribute thousands of blue ribbons in April to help raise awareness in every community about the critical need for child abuse prevention.

The latest child abuse statistics compiled by the Virginia Department of Social Services point to the continuing need for everyone to recognize and help prevent child abuse:

- Last year, **6,565 children** in the Commonwealth were found to have suffered abuse or neglect, most often by their biological parents. An additional **6,427 children** were determined to be at risk for potential abuse and referred to family support services.
- **31** children died as a result of child abuse in fiscal year 2003 – **25 of those children were under age 3.**
- **56%** of the child abuse victims were white; **41%**, African-American; **3%**, multi-racial; and **1%** were Asian.
- **56%** of the maltreatment was due to physical neglect (failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or supervision); **26%** was due to physical abuse; and **12%** to sexual abuse.

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The cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is estimated at \$258 million per day, according to a Prevent Child Abuse America study. Abused and neglected children are more likely to exhibit behavior disorders, to become teen parents, to need special education and remedial help in school, to abuse alcohol and drugs, and to enter the juvenile justice system.

Child abuse and neglect are often characterized as part of a cycle because parents who suffered abuse as children often end up abusing their own children. The cycle of child abuse can be broken when families at risk receive family support services and parenting education, child abuse prevention experts say.

#### **How can we all help prevent child abuse and neglect?**

- Recognize the warning signals: parents under chronic stress, children exhibiting negative and anxious behaviors, signs of physical neglect and abuse.
- Encourage families under stress to seek out education and support services. Call the 1-800-CHILDREN support line in Virginia.
- Report suspected child abuse and neglect. Call your local social services department or call the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at **1-800-552-7096**.

The Virginia Coalition for Child Abuse Prevention, which consists of 19 organizations and corporations, is leading this year's Child Abuse Prevention Month efforts. For more information about Prevention Month, call Prevent Child Abuse Virginia at **1-800-CHILDREN**.